

February 20, 1983

Mike,

Although "A 1980s View" section of the new work (RLWIKM) makes it clear that the challenge to post-Marx Marxists, beginning with Engels, includes so-called Western Marxists, I nevertheless suddenly feel it necessary to make the latter reference more explicit especially as it relates to Karl Korsch. Perhaps the fact that Kevin will go to Germany this spring is what made me think of Korsch's homeland. Since, however, preparation for my lecture tour around all three works this Marx centenary leaves me no time ~~to~~ to work out a Political-Philosophic Letter, I'm using the form of a note ~~to~~ to express my thoughts informally.

Ironically, one reason I consider it necessary to expand the challenge to post-Marx Marxists by focusing on "Western Marxists" is that Lukacs and Korsch were the very ones who did ~~not~~ the Dialectic's revolutionary nature as inseparable from actual revolutions; who did tightly relate the Second International's reformism that ended in outright betrayal once World War I erupted, were nevertheless the very ones who, as revolutionaries, accepted Lenin's revolutionary politics without ever relating it to his strictly philosophic reorganization. Why? Why had they never seen any significance in what Lenin achieved in 1914, that they first worked out in 1919-1923? How could the Great Divide in Marxism, with the outbreak of world war, ^{erased} by Lenin be left at the political level without the search for Lenin's return to the Hegelian dialectic "in and for itself"?

Heretofore I had allowed Lukacs' and Korsch's disregard of Lenin's deeper penetration of the dialectic and its d'today-ness, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, Lenin's philosophic ambivalence when it came to the question of organization, i.e., his concept of "the party to lead" reast in peace as if so-called Western Marxists are entitled to some sort of special privileges. Now that, with the completion of Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, 1 and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution which could present the Marx oeuvre as a totality and take issue with true revolutionary giants -- Lenin, Luxemburg, Trotsky -- most critically, all other who claim to be Marxists must likewise be measured against Marx's Marxism, not Engelsianism as well as those who deny the ~~letter~~

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letter, not as measured against Marx's Marxism, but for purposes of presenting alternatives, be that with Existentialism or the latest professional anthropology. The reason for focusing on Korsch is, precisely, because so-called Western Marxism was the excuse (or reason, as you wish) that Jean-Paul Sartre and Merleau-Ponty used in the post-World War II period. It is the excuse global anthropologists still use when they want to escape Marxian methodology and concentrate on facts, facts, facts. It is the today-ness of the past debates that have sent me back to re-reading Korsch. In reading now the Korsch reference to Hegel that I quoted in Philosophy and Revolution I became very conscious of the fact that he had allowed for altogether too many qualifications of the Hegelian Dialectic as he kept repeating over and over again materialism, materialism, materialism.

In my view to skip over the dialectics of an actual new Great Divide in Marxism that Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks at the outbreak of WWI had created by saying "But Lukacs and Korsch didn't know of Lenin's Abstract of Hegel's Science of Logic since he kept it private when they did their grappling with the Hegelian dialectic in the specific milieu of German Marxism" is a way of viewing chronology as facticity rather dialectic sequence. The proof of that can be seen in the fact that in all the years since the publication of Lenin's 1914 Philosophic Notebooks they still didn't dig deep into that Great Divide.

It is true that they didn't know, when they were developing their view on the imperativeness of a revolutionary return to the Hegelian dialectic in 1919 to 1923, that Lenin had already achieved a much deeper and more comprehensive review of the dialectic with his Abstract in 1914. But they did not know of the 1922 popular Letter Lenin had addressed to the editors of a new journal "Under the Banner of Marxism" which called for "a systematic study of the Hegelian dialectic from a materialist standpoint." Indeed, Korsch used that specific quotation as frontispiece of his Marxism and Philosophy without ever sensing any philosophic discontinuity between the Lenin of 1908 who had given the green light to vulgar materialism with his Materialism and Empirio-Criticism and the Lenin of 1914-23 who had produced the dialectical Abstract

The truth is that they kept treating two very different works -- Materialism and Empirio-Criticism and the Abstract¹-- as if it were one and the same continuous work even after the latter was publicly known. Instead of digging deep into the Philosophic Great Divide, they proceeded narrowly on their own way and accepted the politics of "Leninism". Thereby they did nothing to close the great philosophic void which resulted after Lenin's death even as it became the characteristic post-Marx Marxism with the death of Karl Marx. Nowhere is that clearer in their revolutionary embrace of Lenin's great works State and Revolution which otherwise didn't work out the dialectics of the party from its 1902-03 vanguardist concept. (The fact that Party is never mentioned in that work though it is so great as a recreation of Marx's Critique of the Gotha Program I'll deal with later.)

As you know I was nevertheless anxious enough to give Korsch credit for re-establishing the revolutionary nature of the Hegelian dialectic to reproduce Korsch's way quoting Hegel's formulation that "revolution was lodged and expressed as if in the very form of their thoughts and stressed especially Korsch's calling attention to the fact that this use of revolution was by no means left only in the sphere of thought but will be held to be "an objective component of the total social process of real revolution."

Clearly, it is not out of any concern for firstness that I wish to set the record straight. The necessity for correcting the factual arises, not from facticity, but from the ambience of the dialectic. If we are not to narrow the dialectic either only to the objective or only to the subjective, the attitude to chronology cannot, must not be reduced to facticity. When all is said and done, it is the objectivity of that historic momentous event of a world war and collapse of established Marxism which compelled the militant materialist, Lenin, to turn to the "subjective", the "idealist" Hegel. Marx's Marxism was rooted therein not ~~simply~~ only as "origin" but as continuous dialectic which spells out ~~the~~ "return" /as ^{recreation} as the imperative need for a new relationship of theory to practice. The relationship of theory to practice, or subject to object so preoccupied Marx from the very first that he no sooner completed the 1844 Economic Philosophic Manuscripts that he followed it up with the 11 Thesis on Feuerbach, the first of which reads: "The chief defect of all previous materialism (including Feuerbach) is that the object, actuality, sensuousness is conceived only in the form of the object or perception, but not as sensuous human activity, praxis, not subjectively. Hence, in opposition to materialism the active side was developed by idealism...Feuerbach wants sensuous objects actually different from thought objects; but he does not comprehend human activity itself as objective...Consequently he ~~is~~ does not comprehend the significance of "revolutionary", of "practical-critical" activity."

Korsch, on the other hand, far from seeing that Marx credited, not materialism, but "idealism", i.e., Hegelian dialectic, with the development of the "active" aspect of subjectivity, ^{human activity} ~~individual~~ having undergone a ~~much~~ deeper development than from ~~materialist~~ to social, praxis, reduces ideas to hardly more than the mirror image of the materialist underpinning, a 1:1 relationship of objective to subjective. This gets further qualified by focusing on the "similarity" between Hegelian and Kantian dialectic and other German idealists. Thus, he no sooner quotes Hegel on the "revolution lodged in the very form of thought" but not restricted to thought, than he footnotes it with a lengthy reference to Kant's "Conflict of the Faculties: "The revolution of an intellectually gifted people, such as the ones we are witnessing today, arouses all onlookers (who are not themselves directly involved) to sympathize with it in a way that approaches enthusiasm."

Korsch has a peculiar way of describing the life/death of German idealism: instead of making an exit, classical German philosophy, the ideological expression of the revolutionary movement of the bourgeoisie, made a transition to a new science which henceforward appeared in the history of ideas as the general expression of the of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat: the theory of 'scientific socialism' first founded and formulated by Marx and Engels in the 1840s."

As we see, the qualifications ^(Korsch introduced into) of the Hegelian dialectic also were extended to the Marxian. To Korsch "The emergence of Marxist theory is, in Hegelian-Marxist terms, only the 'other side' of the emergence of the real proletarian movement; it is both sides together that comprise the concrete totality of the historical process."

Marx's Marxism, far from being only "the other side" of the proletarian movement is a whole new continent of thought and of revolution in which "totality₂" does not stop as a mere sum of its parts. The core of the dialectic--the transformation of reality-- doesn't stop at any one period. Marx's Marxism, his Promethean vision produced ever new moments which the "Western Marxists" failed to work out for their epoch.

Where Lenin, in his return to the Hegelian dialectic, singles out Hegel on "Cognition not only reflects the world but creates it", Korsch keeps quoting over and over again from Anti-Duhring and ~~Engels~~ ^{Feuerbach} The End of Classical German Philosophy as if they were Marx's works and thus falls headlong into Engelsian "positive science": "That which still survives (philosophy in Marx-rd) independently of all earlier philosophies is the science of ~~the~~ thought and its laws -- formal logic and dialectics. Everything else is subsumed in the positive science of nature and ~~history~~ history." This leads Korsch to become ~~so~~ defensive on ~~the~~ the question of philosophy and Marxism, ~~that~~ despite his total break with the German Social Democracy and despite his magnificent ~~own~~ ^{own} connection of the ~~the~~ 2nd Int'l's ^{neglect} neglect of philosophy and the theory of revolution, ~~that~~ he ~~maintains~~ holds on that "it is true that it appears "Marxism itself is at once superceded and annihilated as a philosophical object." As if that were not enough of an Engelsianism, he once again quotes Anti-Duhring as if that were by Marx himself: "That which survives independently of all earlier philosophies is the science of thought and its laws--formal logic and dialectics. Everything else is subsumed in the positive science of nature and history." Having reduced the

dialectic to "science" and history to historicism, Korsch makes it impossible to grapple with Marx's dialectics--the transformation of historic narrative into historic reason, No wonder that even when he is at his most creative in revealing the relationship of the Second International's reformism to its neglect of the dialectics of revolution--the need, not to "take over" the state, but for its abolition, Korsch sees and accepts Lenin's Great Divide only politically. He praises highly Lenin's State and Revolution which had recreated Marx's Critique of the ~~Gotha~~ ^{philosophically} Gotha Program, and the Paris Commune as "really no longer a state", but since he hasn't/worked through the Great Divide, he hardly can recreate it for his epoch, nor see that Lenin himself had these stopped on the eve of revolution, not on what happens after conquest of power. So blind is he to that turning point where the dialectics, far from being a question of revolution vs. reformism, would become ~~the~~ ^{the} maxi of confronting the most horrifying of all problems--the counter-revolution arising from within the revolution itself--that he sinks into stagifying Marx's Marxism.

Hereby

second period may be said to last approximately to the end of the century, leaving out all the less important divisions (the foundation and collapse of the First International; the interlude of the Commune; the struggle between Marxists and Lassallefaner; the Anti-socialist laws in Germany; trade unions; the founding of the Second International). The third phase extends from the start of this century to the present and into an indefinite future."

The logic of this illogical staggying of Marx's development which reduced Marx's universal of the Paris Commune into a mere interlude stands out in all its contradictoriness when Korsch once again returns to the highpoint of his revitalization of the dialectic when the totality of his attack when the GSD is ~~is~~ proven most dramatically by its attitude to the Critique of the Gotha Program in the contrast with its total opposite Lenin's State and Revolution.

Korsch's practice of a 1:1 relation of subjective to objective has him divide Marx's development into 3 periods, with the first being the high point, 1843-48. Once the 1848 revolution is defeated it is all ~~xxxxxx~~ ^{one long} retrogressing which he subdivides into two, 1848-64, which he begs off from analysing since Marx so "masterfully", in his "Inaugural Address of 1864" of the First International, described the 'period of feverish industrial industrial activity, moral degeneration and political reaction.' Here is how Korsch continues with the continuation of that second period:

It takes a lot of excavating to disclose Korsch's type of Kantian dialectics at the very point when, politically, he has the deepest dialectical penetration in his rejection of the Second Int's theoretical neglect of Marx's Critique of the Gotha Program and accepting Lenin's State and Revolution, esp., when at that point we need confront Lenin's philosophic ambivalence by having stopped without tackling the dilectic of the Party, and thus the 1902-03 vanguardist concept of the party is left untouched. But leave it to Korsch to come to our aid, first by focusing on Lenin's P.S. as if that were the climax to the revolutionary analysis. That is to say, where Lenin admits he had to stop his theoretical expose on state and revolution before he had a chance to dig into actual revolutions, either 1905 or 1917, Korsch stops also his analysis, though ~~no~~ no revolution is knocking at his door which Lenin, of course, must be happy by that "interruption": "It's more pleasant and useful to go through 'the experience of revolution' than to write about it." So, in 1923, we have yet to approach the problem: what happens after the conquest of power?

Secondly, in turning to Marx's Critique of the Gotha Program, Korsch still has not a word to say on the question of organization, though he is rapturous in praise of Marx's Critique both in the original 1923 edition of Marxism and Philosophy and its 1930 reprint with a new introduction as well as his special introduction that he had written to the Critique itself. But isn't that, that precisely, the overriding question--the relationship of theory to organization. Wasn't that Critique written as "Marginal Notes" to a Party's program? Wasn't it sent to a leader (Brack) in the parties-about-to be united? And wasn't that sent simultaneously with the French edition of CAPITAL, Vol. I in the very period as Marx was plunging in a study of the Russian ancient/commune ^{peasant} which disclosed such "new moments" in Marx's development as to leave a trail even for our period of the 1980s? O.k., let's ~~begin~~ begin at the beginning of the adventures of the Critique, written in 1875. ^{German Workers} The Party proceeded on its merry way without so much as publishing Marx's Critique; much less make that the foundation for the Party. 15 years later, when Engels finally compelled the new German Social Democracy to publish the Critique in 1891, it was clear that "knowing" the Critique had as little impact as not knowing it, --just like, ~~as~~ in Korsch's period, no new ground

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had been created by "knowing" instead of not knowing Lenin's
Hegelian
1914 break-through on the/dialectic.

Just as considering Marx and Engels as one led, at best, to muddying up Marx's Marxism even when no revisionism was involved, as with Engels, so not seeing Lenin's Great Divide philosophically resulted, at one and the same time, to the dilution of Marx's Marxism and losing the dialectical sequence for the new problems after the death of Lenin. Put simply, the challenge to post-Marx Marxists is needed, not just to clear up the debris left by Engels' interpretation of what were the Marx "bequests", but to be ~~re~~ informed by Marx's inseparable new continent of thought and of revolution, neither of which is inseparable from the other.

Correctly, as Luxemburg did magnificently, to reject the very first revisionist call for the "removal of the dialectical scaffolding" from Marxism, without concretising and deepening the dialectic for one's own age creates a gap. That the historic continuity with Marx seemed to have ended with the 1848 revolution, rather than extending it to the 1850 Address on the "revolution in permanence" first emerged in the 1905 Revolution. By 1907, when the International Congress didn't even put that Revolution on the agenda signified, as I expressed it in Marxism and Freedom in Ch. IX, ~~especially in the section~~ "The Beginning of the End of the Second International". You have every right to call attention to the fact that clarification was achieved ^{eyes} with/of 1957. It certainly is true that the combination of hindsight and the fact that, with the eruption of the Hungarian Revolution, came also the placing on the historic stage of Marx's 1844 Humanist essays could not but reopen the relationship of philosophy to revolution. But, why then, did ~~not~~ Lenin's return to the Hegelian dialectic in 1914 ~~not~~ lead post-Marx Marxists ~~and~~ "Western Marxists" to skip that new ground from which to take off?

To sum up briefly--I hope I'll get time to develop this more after my lecture tour around our trilogy of revolution-- what remains of the essence is, at one and ~~times~~ the same time, to relate historic continuity, the re turn to Marx's Marxism as a recreation, to the discontinuity of the ages and, with it, to be able to meet the new challenges, As a precondition for that I hold it imperative to reconsider post-Marx Marxism, measure it against Marx's Marxism and, far from skipping what had been created by Lenin's Great Divide philosophically to take off from that.

What a rereading of Karl Korsch's Marxism and Philosophy has illuminated is that the Dialectic needs extension, to the dialectics of the Party, which Marx had charted/and which even Lenin who so freshly recreated on the question of the need to abolish the state and, with the revolution, proceed to a new form of power that is "no longer a state", didn't have time to extend to what happens after, though he certainly did leave us jumping off points, must be worked out by this age. ~~dialectically~~ ^{dialectically} A first step toward that task is to make sure that not only there is no division between philosophy and revolution but also not between philosophy and organization. Concretely that demands the relationship of Organization to Marx's theory of "revolution in permanence." It is with that in mind that I entitled the penultimate chapter of ROSA LUXEMBURG, WOMEN'S LIBERATION AND MARX'S PHILOSOPHY OF REVOLUTION, "The Philosopher of Permanent Revolution Creates New Ground for Organization." It is only then that the final chapter on Marx's "new moments", including his Ethnological Notebooks and our age's Third World, disclosed the trail to the 1980s. That doesn't mean we have the answer all signed and sealed. It does mean working this out demands a challenge to post-Marx Marxists.

Yours,
Raya

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(2) On that score Lukacs is, at least in 1919-1923 more profoundly dialectical:

"To be clear about the function of theory is also to understand its own basis, the dialectical method. This point is absolutely crucial, and because it has been overlooked much a confusion has been introduced into discussions of dialectics. Engels' arguments in the Anti-Duhring decisively influenced the later life of the theory. However we regard them, whether we grant them classical status or whether we criticise them, deem them to be incomplete or even flawed, we must still agree that this aspect is nowhere treated in them. That is to say, he contrasts the ways in which concepts are formed in dialectics as opposed to 'metaphysics'; he stresses the fact that in dialectics the definite contours of concepts (and the objects they represent) are dissolved. Dialectics he argues, is a continuous process of transition from one definition into the other. In consequence, a one-sided and rigid causality must be replaced in interaction, namely the dialectical relation between subject and object in the historical process, let alone give it the prominence it deserves. Yet without this factor dialectics ceases to be revolutionary, despite attempts (illusory in the last analysis) to retain 'fluid' concepts. For it implies a failure to recognize that in all metaphysics the object remains untouched and unaltered so that thought remains contemplative and fails to become practical; while for the dialectical method the central problem is to change reality."

For that matter there was no change in that false attitude when the 1914 Philosophic Notebooks finally were published. Nor was that failure to recognize the Great Divide due only to political capitulation to Stalinism. No, it was much, much deeper. Lukacs who did finally began making many references to the Abstract, made these with so false a consciousness that he paired Lenin with Stalin as an original philosopher so that both became creators "Marxism in the age of imperialism."

/3/The one-critique Korsch allowed himself of Engels' self-criticism "in an incorrect and undialectical way" Korsch never followed through with his strict Hegelianism (par.156): "...In Hegel's terms, he retreats from the height of the concept to its threshold, to the categories of reacting and mutual interaction, etc."